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General Assembly

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Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

Summary record of the 388th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 5 February 2018, at 10 a.m.

Temporary Chair: Mr. Guterres ..... (Secretary-General)
Chair: Mr. Seck ..... (Senegal)

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18-01685 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda (A/AC.183/2018/L.1)

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

Election of officers

2. **The Temporary Chair** invited the Committee to consider nominations for the posts of Chair, Vice Chairs and Rapporteur of the Committee.

3. The following nominations had been received by the secretariat of the Committee: Mr. Seck (Senegal) for re-election to the office of Chair; Mr. Saikal (Afghanistan), Ms. Rodríguez Camejo (Cuba), Mr. Djani (Indonesia), Mr. Gertze (Namibia) and Ms. Rubiales de Chamorro (Nicaragua) for re-election as the five Vice Chairs; and Mr. Inguanez (Malta) for re-election to the office of Rapporteur.

4. *Mr. Seck (Senegal), Mr. Saikal (Afghanistan), Ms. Rodríguez Camejo (Cuba), Mr. Djani (Indonesia), Mr. Gertze (Namibia), Ms. Rubiales de Chamorro (Nicaragua) and Mr. Inguanez (Malta) were elected by acclamation.*

5. *Mr. Seck (Senegal) took the Chair.*

Statement by the Secretary-General

6. **Mr. Guterres** (Secretary-General), commending the Committee for its tireless work to help to realize the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination, for being a leading voice in supporting the achievement of a two-State solution able to end the Israeli occupation and for having mobilized international support and assistance to the Palestinian people, said that the question of Palestine, inextricably linked with the history of the United Nations, was one of the longest unresolved issues on its agenda. Over many decades, the international community had encouraged a negotiated process leading to a two-State solution, addressing all final status issues on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions, international law and mutual agreements as the only way to lay the foundations for enduring peace.

7. The Security Council had consistently reiterated its vision of a region where two democratic States, Israel and Palestine, lived side by side, in peace, within secure and recognized borders. The General Assembly had reaffirmed the two-State solution through the establishment of a Palestinian State as the only way to achieve stability, peace, prosperity and development in the region. He reiterated his own long-standing wish to see a Palestinian State and an Israeli State, both with a capital in Jerusalem.

8. However, in the face of the current difficult reality, after decades of convergence, global consensus could be eroding, making effective concerted action more difficult to achieve, at a time when it was more important than ever. Negative trends on the ground had the potential to create an irreversible one-State reality incompatible with realizing the legitimate national, historic and democratic aspirations of both Israelis and Palestinians.

9. Ongoing settlement construction and expansion in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, illegal under United Nations resolutions and international law, was a major obstacle to peace and must be halted and reversed. Violence and incitement continued to fuel a climate of fear and mistrust. The humanitarian and economic situation in Gaza remained dire, with the United Nations Country Team in Palestine predicting that Gaza, which remained squeezed by crippling closures and a state of constant humanitarian emergency, would become unliveable by 2020 unless concrete action was taken to improve basic services and infrastructure.

10. With 2 million Palestinians struggling every day with crumbling infrastructure, an electricity crisis, a lack of basic services, chronic unemployment and a paralysed economy, all amid an unfolding environmental disaster, he was extremely concerned that the latest shortfall in funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) would gravely impair its ability to deliver on its mandate and preserve critical services such as education and health care for Palestine refugees. At stake was not only the human security, rights and dignity of the 5 million Palestine refugees across the Middle East, but also the stability of the entire region, which could be affected if UNRWA was unable to continue to provide vital services to that population, both throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory and in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. He appealed to the generosity of the international community not to let that happen and reiterated the importance of advancing Palestinian unity.

11. Reconciliation was a key step in reaching the larger objective of a Palestinian State and lasting peace. He remained steadfast in his commitment, and that of the United Nations, to supporting the parties in their efforts to make the two-State solution a reality. That was the only way to achieve the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and secure a sustainable solution to the conflict. There was no Plan B.

Statement by the Chair

12. **The Chair**, welcoming the unwavering commitment of the Organization to the Palestinian cause and to the two-State solution as the only viable option guaranteeing security, peace, independence and sovereignty to both Israelis and Palestinians, reiterated the Committee's profound concern regarding the recent measures taken by Israel to impose changes to the status quo through the recent adoption of a law that would prevent any future Government from ceding any part of Jerusalem, including East Jerusalem, to an independent Palestinian State in the framework of peace negotiations. The Committee was also concerned about the acceleration of settlement construction in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, in violation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), as well as the troubling situation in the Gaza Strip, under blockade for nearly 10 years, and the deplorable condition of millions of Palestine refugees scattered in host countries, including Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

13. Resolutely attached to a peaceful solution to the question of Palestine, the Committee condemned all forms of violence and incitement to hatred and extremism. Accordingly, the Committee invited the international community to pursue its long-standing efforts to support inter-Palestinian reconciliation, guarantee the financial viability of the institutions of the State of Palestine and build the professional capacities of Palestinians in order to prepare them to manage an independent State, free from occupation.

14. Deeply concerned about the financial deficit at UNRWA, the Committee also called upon Member States to strengthen their support for that institution and encouraged the Division for Palestinian Rights to continue its efforts to implement the training programme for staff of the Palestinian Government. The Committee, meanwhile, would continue to monitor and raise international awareness of the inalienable and imprescriptible rights of the Palestinian people, with the sole objective of achieving a just, definitive and lasting peace between Israel and Palestine.

Statement by the Observer for the State of Palestine

15. **Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that her delegation was grateful for the Bureau's efforts in steering the work of the Committee in line with its General Assembly mandate. Her delegation recognized the Committee's efforts in 2017, including its activities at the United Nations and through conferences, forums and delegation visits aimed at raising awareness of the ongoing plight of the Palestinian people, mobilizing support for realization of their inalienable rights and calling for international efforts to salvage the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, in accordance with the relevant resolutions.

16. At a time deemed by the Palestinian people and their leadership as constituting an existential crisis, the Committee's work was more important than ever. There was profound uncertainty and instability, deepening despair and a perpetual deterioration of the situation on the ground as Israel, the occupying Power, entrenched its half-century of occupation and oppression. On the eve of the seventieth anniversary of the Nakbah, no horizon was in sight for an end to the suffering and injustice and there were no prospects for peace. Her delegation therefore deeply appreciated the unwavering commitment of the Bureau, the Committee as a whole and the Division for Palestinian Rights in support of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

17. Recent reckless decisions had further denigrated the rights and legitimate national aspirations of the Palestinian people, dismissing the decades-old global consensus on Jerusalem and on the question of Palestine as a whole on the basis of Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. The decision taken by the President of the United States of America on 6 December 2017 to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and to transfer the United States Embassy there, and the punitive measures taken thereafter, had only emboldened Israel to act with impunity in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Indeed, the occupying Power was pressing on in deliberate, systematic and grave breach of international law and in direct violation of United Nations resolutions, including General Assembly resolution ES-10/19 on the status of Jerusalem. The occupation, including the continued colonization of land and the oppression, forced displacement and collective punishment of the Palestinian people, young and old, was destroying whatever potential was left to realize the two-State solution.

18. A risk of further humanitarian deterioration loomed following the decision by the United States to dramatically reduce its funding to UNRWA. For nearly 5.5 million Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the Agency continued to represent a lifeline, providing invaluable humanitarian and development assistance, emergency aid and protection, and had been recognized by all as making a tangible contribution to regional stability. Actions undermining the Agency's mandate threatened to further destabilize an already volatile situation and deepen the despair, with far-reaching consequences.

19. Her delegation cautioned against the politicization of humanitarian assistance and appealed to the international community to take a firm stand in rejection of such punitive, unjust actions and to mobilize support, where possible, at the present critical time. Against the backdrop of that dismal reality, the principled positions regarding the question of Palestine and the long-standing parameters of a just solution, reaffirmed by the international community in the Security Council and the General Assembly in December 2017 and by capitals all across globe, had become more vital than ever. The resounding rejection of the recent decision by the United States and the expressions of support for the mandate of UNWRA, pending a just solution, had helped to restore the diminishing hopes of the Palestinian people and to reinforce their conviction in international law and in the United Nations as central to the path to peace and justice.

20. Recognizing the principled and constant efforts of the Secretary-General and his team in the Division for Palestinian Rights, and those of the Committee, she reiterated her delegation's appeal for the intensification of international efforts aimed at achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, including the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map. Concerted action was needed to bring an end to the half century of Israeli occupation, as called for in recent resolutions, including General Assembly resolution 72/13, renewing the Committee's mandate, as well as Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) and General Assembly resolution ES-10/19. For genuine progress to be made towards the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, Member States must mobilize the political will to implement United Nations resolutions and uphold respective obligations in accordance with those resolutions, the Charter of the United Nations and international humanitarian and human rights law. That was a matter of urgency, if the peace process were to be revived and the two-State solution salvaged.

21. Underscoring the call by the Palestinian leadership for a collective peace process under international auspices aimed at achieving a just, lasting and peaceful solution that fulfilled the long-denied rights of the Palestinian people, her delegation urged the United Nations to play a central role in those efforts, with active support from the Committee.

22. Lastly, she requested the Committee's support in relation to two upcoming meetings on the question of Palestine. The President of the State of Palestine, Mahmoud Abbas, had requested to address the Security Council at its monthly briefing on the situation in Middle East, including the Palestinian question, to be held on 20 February 2018, in order to appeal to the Council to uphold its resolutions to salvage the prospects for peace and a just solution to the plight of the Palestinian people. Her delegation was also in discussions with the President of the Security Council and other Council members, Bolivia, France and Sweden, regarding the holding of an Arria-formula meeting, on 22 February 2018, to reflect on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) and the diminishing prospects for the two-State solution.

Update on developments since the previous meeting of the Committee and other activities in 2017

23. The Chair said that, on 18 December 2017, the Security Council had held a briefing on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, during which the majority of Council members had rejected the recent decision on the status of Jerusalem. The resolution had been supported by 14 Council members and opposed by the United States of America.

24. On 21 December 2017, the General Assembly, at its tenth emergency special session, by a vote of 128 in favour to 9 against, with 35 abstentions, had adopted resolution ES-10/19, affirming that any decisions and actions which purported to have altered the character, status or demographic composition of Jerusalem were null and void and calling upon all States to refrain from the establishment of diplomatic missions in the Holy City.

25. On 25 January 2018, the Security Council had held an open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, during which the Chair, on behalf of the Committee, had called attention to the financial deficit at UNRWA.

26. Additional action by the Committee in 2017 had included Committee delegation visits to Mexico, on 7 February, and the United Republic of Tanzania, from 4 to 6 December, the United Nations Roundtable on the Question of Palestine, held in Managua on 4 February, the United Nations Capacity-Building Workshop on Sustainable Development Goals for Staff of the State of Palestine, held jointly with the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia in Beirut on 27 and 28 April, and the United Nations Forum to Mark Fifty Years of Occupation, held at Headquarters on 28 and 29 June, as well as an interactive meeting with political leader Hanan Ashrawi, held on 17 March on the margins of the sixty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

Draft programme of work for 2018
(A/AC.183/2018/L.2)

27. **The Chair**, introducing the Committee's draft programme of work for 2018 (A/AC.183/2018/L.2), said that section I listed the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly at its seventy-second session; section II indicated priority issues in the Committee's programme of work for 2018; and section III contained a description of the planned activities of the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights.

28. The Committee's activities in 2018 would fall within the scope of the seventieth anniversary of the Nakbah. In addition to working to end the occupation, the Committee would prioritize the question of Jerusalem and the mobilization of the widest possible international support for the State of Palestine to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. To that end, the Committee, with assistance from the Division for Palestinian Rights, would continue to expand and improve the capacity-building programme for staff of the State of Palestine with a view to supporting the Government of the State of Palestine in its efforts to establish more robust and efficient institutions capable of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

29. **Mr. Arcia Vivas** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) commended the Committee's efforts in support of the Palestinian cause and endorsed the support voiced by the Secretary-General on the question of Palestine. His delegation considered the programme of work to be very complete, with a focus on topics that promoted awareness of the situation in Palestine, and welcomed the proposed visit to Latin America, a region well known for its commitment to the Palestinian cause.

30. *The Chair took it that it that the Committee wished to adopt the draft programme of work.*

31. *It was so decided.*

Update by members and observers of the Committee

32. **Mr. Gertze** (Namibia), expressing his delegation's full support for the Committee and its programme of work for 2018, welcomed the actions proposed and looked forward in particular to the United Nations forum on the question of Palestine to mark the seventieth anniversary of the 1948 war and the Nakbah, to be held at Headquarters on 17 and 18 May 2018. The planned Committee delegation visits to Uganda, the European Union and Latin America would be of particular value to the Committee's work on the question of Palestine, especially given the recent decisions taken by the United States Government to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Israel and to drastically reduce its funding to UNRWA, a lifeline for Palestine refugees.

33. Placing continued priority on finding a just and lasting solution, his delegation emphasized the importance for efforts to be in full compliance with international law, in particular the resolutions passed in the United Nations. Tensions were in grave danger of rising and the process would suffer more setbacks if those meant to serve as honest brokers disrespected the decisions and resolutions passed by all. It was necessary to be vigilant against the temptation to favour one side over the other. Continued settlement expansion and ongoing provocations diminished the chances for a peaceful resolution to the conflict and severely heightened prospects for violence and hatred. In that respect, and in the light of recent developments at the United Nations, all actions needed to be guided strictly by the principles and obligations laid out in the Charter. Years of progress towards identifying the most viable — and only — option to resolve the conflict, namely, the two-State solution, should not be discarded. While the Committee's focus was on helping the parties achieve a just, peaceful and lasting solution, it was important, in attempting to bring resolution to the conflict, to keep uppermost in mind that the question primarily concerned the lives and realities of ordinary people.

34. **Ms. Rubiales de Chamorro** (Nicaragua) said that Nicaragua had stood shoulder to shoulder with Palestine for decades in the latter's struggle and would continue to advocate for the establishment of a Palestinian State within pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, laying the foundations for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. Peace would remain an impossibility until the two States could live side by side in peace, hence the pressing need for the international community to join the Palestinian cause and reject unilateral actions virtually designed to prevent the implementation of the two-State solution, thereby jeopardizing international peace and security.

35. The Committee and the international community as a whole had a particular responsibility to implement General Assembly resolution 181 (II), which had provided for the creation of two States, a State of Israel and a State of Palestine. For years, the Committee had pondered the question of how the United Nations, an organization that promoted the defence of human rights, could allow the rights of an entire people — to land, to water, to life with dignity — to be violated. The case of Palestine should therefore be broached first and foremost in any discussion of human rights. Politics and

ideology aside, what was at stake was the daily life of a people without a land, a situation that must not be allowed to persist.

36. Lastly, in 2018 the Committee must redouble its efforts to garner recognition of the State of Palestine by as many States as possible, particularly since negotiations could not proceed between two parties when one of them was not recognized. Palestine had every right to sit at the negotiation table as an equal and to work with the international community to achieve the two-State solution desired by all.

37. **Ms. Rodríguez Camejo** (Cuba) said that her delegation supported the Committee's ambitious programme of work for 2018 and welcomed the Secretary-General's presence at the meeting as an indication of his continued support for a United Nations-led solution to the long-term conflict whose main victim was the Palestinian people. Earnest and renewed international efforts were required to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which was at the heart of broader regional conflicts.

38. The recent decision of the United States Government to proclaim Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Israel and to move its embassy to that city had been the subject of numerous pronouncements by the international community, including the Committee. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cuba had expressed its deepest concern and rejection of the unilateral declaration by the President of the United States regarding Jerusalem, characterizing it as a serious and flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations. The decision implied a change in the historic status of Jerusalem and violated the legitimate interests of the Palestinian people and the Arab and Islamic peoples, with grave consequences for regional security and stability.

39. In addition, the financial blackmail perpetrated against countries and organizations and, in particular, UNRWA, was regrettable, and the Committee must address the primary consequence thereof, namely, increasing Palestinian suffering. The Committee must also work actively to gain recognition for the State of Palestine, enabling Palestinian colleagues to engage with the international community as equals and to obtain full membership for the State of Palestine in the United Nations.

40. Cuba would continue to urge the Security Council to uphold its responsibility to maintain international peace and security and to demand the implementation of its relevant resolutions. In that regard, her delegation would participate in the forthcoming meeting with the President of the State of Palestine and in the Arria-formula meeting on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016).

41. Cuba remained in favour of a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, based on a two-State solution that allowed Palestinians to exercise their right to self-determination and to have an independent and sovereign State within pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

42. **Mr. Arcia Vivas** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that his Government had carried out a number of activities in relation to the question of Palestine in January 2018. During a visit to his country by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Palestine, cooperation agreements had been concluded between the two countries in such areas as mining, tourism and agriculture, and preparations had begun for an official visit to the country by the President of the State of Palestine.

43. To commemorate the fifty-third anniversary of the Palestinian Revolution, the Ambassador of the State of Palestine in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela had placed a floral offering before the National Pantheon. The graduating class of the Salvador Allende Latin American School of Medicine had included 17 Palestinian doctors, attesting to the Venezuelan commitment to building Palestinian institutional capacity for the benefit of the Palestinian people. Lastly, the Permanent Representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the United Nations had presented the position of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries in the open debate of the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian Question.

44. **Mr. Djani** (Indonesia), echoing the Secretary-General's warning that there was no plan B to finding a lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, said that enhancing the Committee's cooperation was ever more pressing in the light of the recent pronouncement by a certain delegation regarding Jerusalem. For its part, Indonesia remained committed to the Palestinian cause, which it had championed since the 1955 Asia-Africa Conference. The Committee must do its utmost to increase global awareness of the Palestinian plight, lest it come to be regarded as a routine matter or eclipsed by other crises. The Committee should also underscore that Palestinians had languished in poverty and been subjected to abuses of power and human rights violations for years. Following the regrettable decision taken by the United States to withdraw funding for UNRWA, he hoped that other means of support for capacity-building and

humanitarian assistance would be found in order to prevent yet more Palestinian suffering. The forthcoming Security Council meetings on Palestine would provide another opportunity to garner widespread attention for what was ultimately a question of humanity and an obligation that the United Nations had thus far failed to uphold. It was incumbent upon all 193 Member States to come together to deliver on that unfulfilled promise, thereby enabling Palestine and Israel to live side by side in peace and harmony.

45. **Ms. Mudallali** (Observer for Lebanon) said that at a politically delicate time when Palestinian rights were under unprecedented assault, voices must be raised to advocate for those rights. Resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict hinged on reaching a just and comprehensive peace by upholding the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and establishing an independent State of Palestine within 4 June 1967 borders, with Jerusalem — the eternal capital of Palestine — as its capital. A solution must also be found to the refugee question, on the basis of the relevant internationally recognized resolutions. The Arab Peace Initiative adopted in 2002 had established those principles as the fundamental basis for achieving the desired peace.

46. Any attempt to undermine the final status issues that underpinned the peace process would only hasten its deterioration. With the world's attention focused on Jerusalem as a result of such attempts, the centrality of the Holy City could not be ignored or denied. Furthermore, the Palestinian people could not and must not be asked to conceive of a resolution of their national question that excluded Jerusalem.

47. The Committee's existence embodied the international community's firm belief in the rights of the Palestinian people, and support for the Committee amounted to support for justice and the international rule of law. Achieving a just and comprehensive peace and ensuring respect for the Palestinian people's inalienable rights were complementary and mutually reinforcing aims. Any stalemate in that regard, citing faltering peace as a pretext, would only result in a vicious cycle of tensions and violence.

48. **Mr. Saikal** (Afghanistan) said that Afghanistan stood firm in support of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the two-State solution. The people of his own country, the target of numerous terror attacks, were no strangers to the violation of basic human rights and the kind of pain endured by Palestinians for decades. His Government's stand for human rights had long been its way of countering violence and anguish. Interacting with the international community across governmental and other sectors was crucial to keeping people abreast of developments in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

49. **Mr. Abdelaziz** (Observer for the League of Arab States) said that the Group of Arab States and the League of Arab States had undertaken various activities to preserve the viability of the two-State solution and to address recent attempts by a major power to change the situation on the ground in the Holy City by recognizing it as the capital of the State of Israel and transferring its embassy there, thereby undermining a final status issue that must be resolved through direct negotiations between Israel and Palestine. Only the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital, living alongside Israel in peace, security and stability, would bring a just resolution to the question of Palestine.

50. At a meeting of the Arab Ministerial Committee for the Arab Peace Initiative held on 1 February 2018, the League had reaffirmed the Arab position rejecting the United States decision on Jerusalem. It had also welcomed the near consensus reached by the international community, with very few dissenting votes in support of the position taken by the United States, in resolutions adopted by the Security Council and by the General Assembly at its tenth emergency special session. The Committee must redouble its efforts to enjoin those countries that had either abstained from or not attended the votes on the General Assembly resolution to commit to upholding the relevant United Nations resolutions on Palestine, in spite of the political pressure aimed at discouraging such support. In that connection, there was a need to garner recognition by more countries for a State of Palestine within the 1967 borders. The recognition of a mere 5 to 10 additional States would bring the number of countries recognizing the State of Palestine to a figure amounting to two-thirds of the United Nations membership. Moreover, the creation of new facts on the ground could be used as an incentive to rally support for additional resolutions on the subject.

51. The Council of the League of Arab States had stressed the importance of countering the negative repercussions of the withdrawal of funding to UNRWA. Cutting off the Agency's funding would indirectly influence another final status issue central to the two-State solution, namely, the refugee question.

52. Welcoming the upcoming visit by the President of the State of Palestine to the Security Council, he reaffirmed that, contrary to the spurious allegations made by many, there was indeed a responsible Palestinian partner ready to negotiate. He called on

Security Council members supportive of the State of Palestine to show their support by actively participating in the Council meeting at which both President Abbas and a representative of Israel would be present. For its part, the League of Arab States looked forward to participating fully in the Arria-formula meeting on 22 February and in other initiatives with all relevant stakeholders to promote the just and comprehensive resolution of the question of Palestine hoped for by all.

The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.

United Nations A/AC.183/SR.389

General Assembly

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Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

Summary record of the 389th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 28 March 2018, at 4 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Seck ..... (Senegal)

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18-05051 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 4.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

The situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and developments in the political process

2. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that, faced with the recent illegal and provocative decision by the United States to move its embassy to Jerusalem, the Security Council had staunchly defended its resolutions concerning the legal status of Jerusalem, including resolutions 476 (1980) and 478 (1980). At the same time, the United States administration had cut its funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) by more than 50 per cent, and stopped a $48 million programme that had provided food for people in the Gaza Strip. The United States administration had also decided to expedite the relocation of its embassy, which was now to occur on 14 May 2018. Those actions compounded the outrage of the Palestinian people; rather than showing sensitivity the current United States administration was showing a complete disregard for international law, resolutions of the Security Council and the policies of previous administrations.

3. Various conferences had been convened to try to address the financial crisis that UNRWA was facing. At a conference held in Rome, convened and co-chaired by Jordan, Sweden and Egypt and attended by the Secretary-General and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, various countries had pledged approximately $100 million towards bridging the agency's $446 million funding deficit. While that was a positive start, more money was needed for UNRWA to continue to provide all its services until the end of 2018. Other meetings had also been convened to deal with the dire economic situation of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including one held in Brussels, where pledges had been made amounting to approximately $550 million, representing 80 per cent of the funds needed to build a major desalination plant in the Gaza Strip, without which the area would be uninhabitable by 2020. The plant would meet the water needs of the people in Gaza through 2050.

4. The United States Government had convened another meeting, in Washington, D.C., with the stated aim of brainstorming on ways to ameliorate the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. However, bemused by such hypocrisy, the Palestinian leadership had not attended. The United States administration was expected to put forth proposals, but had not yet done so. Factors such as the corruption issues facing Prime Minister Netanyahu, and the logical refusal of the Palestinian leadership to engage with the United States administration if it continued to refuse to negotiate about Jerusalem and to deny money to UNRWA, might delay whatever the United States had in mind.

5. The manipulation of the political process over the past 20 years by the United States had not led to progress. The President of the State of Palestine had therefore proposed a collective approach, which would involve the convening of an international conference by mid-2018 to develop an international mechanism to resolve the Israel-Palestine conflict, to save the two-State solution and to create of an environment conducive to ending the Israeli occupation that began in 1967 and establish the independence of the State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital. The Council of Arab Ambassadors in New York had also been instructed to consult with all the members of the Security Council regarding that initiative and other proposals made by the President.

6. The consultations, which had just finished, had been built around three ways of investing in peace and saving the two-State solution. Firstly, the ambassadors had encouraged the Security Council to support the application by Palestine to become a State Member of the United Nations. Beginning in 2012, when the General Assembly had voted to recognize Palestine as an observer State, Palestine had been playing an increasingly larger role in international affairs: it had become a party to international treaties and conventions and was an active participant in various international bodies, for example by becoming a member of the Bureau of the Assembly of International Criminal Court. Currently, the prospect of achieving the two-State solution was remote and a single State with two separate systems, a form of apartheid, was the reality. Becoming a full State Member of the United Nations would increase the international recognition and leverage of Palestine and would therefore be an investment in peace and saving the two-State solution.

7. Secondly, the ambassadors had lobbied for the implementation Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), in which the Council which held that the Israeli settlements had no legal validity and constituted a major obstacle to peace, and stipulated that it would not recognize any changes to the 4 June 1967 lines, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties through negotiations. The Council had also recognized the principle of differentiation in paragraph 5 of the resolution by calling States to

distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967.

8. In his briefing to the Security Council on 26 March 2018 the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov, had reported that there had been two important developments with regard to the principle of differentiation: the Danish parliament had adopted a resolution in which it invoked the principle in its dealings with Israel, and the European Commission had made some of its dealings with Israel conditional upon the principle of differentiation. He therefore encouraged Member States to report any distinctions made by their Governments between Israel proper and the Occupied Palestinian Territory in their dealings with Israel to the Secretary-General so that he would be compelled to acknowledge that the international community was complying with paragraph 5 of resolution 2334 (2016).

9. Lastly, the ambassadors had engaged with members of the Security Council on the matter of providing international protection to the civilian population until the Israeli occupation ended. In that connection, he urged the Security Council to consider ways of enhancing its involvement in the provision of such protection, in the light of the relevant compilation that had been prepared by the Secretary-General and transmitted to the Council at the latter's request. The ambassadors had completed the consultation process and were awaiting further instructions from their Governments.

10. The day that the United States was planning to move its embassy to Jerusalem, 14 May, was looming. All parties should take collective action to prevent it from happening and decide how they would respond to the illegal act if they failed to prevent it. With regard to the efforts by Israel to obtain a seat in the Security Council, Mr. Mladenov had reported that Israel was refusing to comply with the provisions of resolution 2334 (2016), and was in fact accelerating its construction of new settlements and openly rejecting the idea of differentiation. If the Security Council was to continue to be respected, such blatant disregard for one of its resolutions must surely disqualify Israel from becoming a member.

11. **Ms. Rodríguez Camejo** (Cuba) said that for decades the Palestinian people had suffered an unjust and constantly deteriorating situation, with their right to self-determination continually violated. However, the current situation was dramatic. Given its mandate, the Committee must take decisive steps to support the inalienable human rights of the Palestinian people, and must not remain passive in the face of the grave violation by the United States of resolutions of both the Security Council and the General Assembly. The Committee should be prepared to take a firm stance on the day that the United States relocated its embassy, and to publicly make clear the implications of such an act, including for the viability of the two-State solution.

12. Cuba supported the initiatives being taken by the League of Arab States, which demonstrated adherence to principles that united all Member States. Palestine should be granted full Member State status and Cuba was ready to provide support in any way it could.

13. **Ms. Krisnamurthi** (Indonesia) said that recent developments, specifically recognition by the United States of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, moving of its embassy and cuts to UNRWA, were deeply concerning, as was the rising number of refugees, especially women and children. Indonesia remained committed to the two-State solution, although the prospect of achieving it was increasingly remote; it was the only good solution for the population of Palestine and should be urgently pursued. The Committee must push for full implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) in order to enhance the role of the Security Council in preventing further escalation of the conflict across the wider region.

Report from the Rapporteur on the Committee visit to Uganda from 26 to 28 February 2018

14. **Mr. Saikal** (Afghanistan) said that he had been part of the Committee team that had conducted a visit to Uganda to mobilize support for the two-State solution and raise awareness of the situation of the Palestinian people and the mandate of the Committee. He was part of the team, which had also included the Chair of the Committee, the Rapporteur, the Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine, the Ambassador of Indonesia to Palestine and the Ambassador of Cuba to Uganda. It had met with a number of high-level officials of the Government of Uganda and participated in an interactive discussion with faculty and students at Makerere University.

15. The team had informed the Ugandan authorities about the unique and principled human rights-focused mandate of the Committee and had drawn attention to the concrete proposal by President Abbas for collective action to salvage the two-State solution. In return, the authorities had informed the team that Uganda supported the work of the Committee, enjoyed excellent relations with both the State of Palestine and Israel and would continue to advocate a comprehensive two-State solution. Uganda believed that a future economically

stronger and more united Africa would be less susceptible to external pressures and thus better able to make a positive contribution to the situation. Civil society organizations had urged the Committee to examine the links between businesses and the Israeli occupation, mobilize civil society in the United States and Europe and involve the African Union and the European Union in efforts to achieve a solution. They had also asked how the Committee and the State of Palestine were dealing with tensions in the Arab region, stressed that the State of Palestine must respect and all the rights of its citizens, and suggested that the Committee should do more to raise awareness of the international law context of the question of Palestine and the Committee's advocacy activities in respect of the Security Council and the General Assembly.

Consideration of upcoming Committee activities:

Committee visit to Panama

16. **The Chair** said that a Committee the objective of the proposed visit to Panama would be to promote support for the two-State solution by the host Government, and to inform local public opinion about the two-State solution, the plight of the Palestinian people, as well as the mandate and role of the Committee. He took it that the Committee wished to approve the proposed visit.

17. *It was so decided.*

United Nations Forum on the question of Palestine to mark the seventieth anniversary of the 1948 War and the Nakba, to be held in New York on 17 and 18 May 2018

18. **The Chair** drew the attention of the Committee to working paper No. 1, distributed by the Secretariat, which contained the provisional programme for the event. Entitled "70 years after 1948 — Lessons to Achieve a Sustainable Peace", the forum would mark 70 years since the withdrawal of British Mandate troops from Palestine and the subsequent establishment of the State of Israel and the outbreak of the first Arab-Israeli war. It would highlight the need to address issues related to the 1948 war, the Nakba and refugees, in the context of the efforts to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine. On 16 May the Committee would hold a closed consultative meeting with civil society representatives, including from the States of Palestine and Israel, which Committee members and observers were encouraged to attend. As per Committee practice, the forum would be open to all Member States, observer States and organizations, and civil society actors.

19. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that since 2018 marked the seventieth anniversary of the Nakba, the Committee should ensure that the forum had a high profile, with the largest possible number of high-level government officials and civil society organizations in attendance. Entities including the Committee, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Group of Arab States, the Latin American and Caribbean Group and the African Group should all bear responsibility for ensuring that the Nakba and the tragedy of the Palestinian people were remembered in the most appropriate way.

20. The Palestinian Mission, in collaboration with the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights, was organizing a concert to take place in the General Assembly hall on 15 May, which would tell part of the history of the Palestinian people through music and poetry. The Mission was in the process of arranging for a well-known Palestinian band to perform. The cultural event would be a humble but important contribution from the international community, through which it would express solidarity with the Palestinian people and refugees, and appreciate the art and creativity of the Palestinian people.

21. **The Chair** took it that the Committee wished to approve the provisional programme for the May 2018 forum, as contained in working paper No. 1.

22. *It was so decided.*

International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem, to be held in Rabat from 26 to 28 June 2018

23. **The Chair** drew the attention of the Committee to working paper No. 2, distributed by the Secretariat, which contained the provisional programme for the event. The International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem, to be organized jointly with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, would afford an opportunity for reflection on the question in the light of the 50-year occupation, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Oslo Accords and recent political developments. It would also provide a platform for youth from East Jerusalem to express their views, and efforts would be made to identify solutions to the many challenges they faced. Civil society organizations would also be able to engage in discussions with Member States and other organizations.

24. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that it would be important to make sure that the Conference was unique in its level of representation and discussion, since the current political situation meant

that many similar conferences were currently being organized.

25. **Mr. Atlassi** (Observer for Morocco) said that his country was pleased to host the conference as a sign of its unwavering and unconditional support for the Palestinian cause.

26. **The Chair** said he took it that the Committee wished to approve the provisional programme for the Conference.

27. *It was so decided.*

Briefing by the Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) Representative Office, New York, on recent developments

28. **Mr. Mulrean** (Director, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) Representative Office, New York) said that UNRWA was a purely humanitarian mission with no political mandate. The Agency was taking steps to mitigate the effects of the financial crisis it was experiencing, which threatened its very existence. However, it would not be able to survive without additional support from the international community.

29. Cost-saving measures across all areas of operation had reduced the Agency's 2017 expenditure by approximately $81 million compared to what it would have been otherwise. However, the increasing needs of refugees and the unexpected 80 per cent cut in the contribution of the State that had been the Agency's largest donor meant that UNRWA had nonetheless been facing a significant shortfall at the start of 2018. A number of donor Governments had provided their contributions earlier in the year than usual, which had given UNRWA time to develop an emergency financing strategy.

30. The Agency was currently seeking individual contributions through its "Dignity is Priceless" campaign and working with the World Bank and the Islamic Development Bank to develop new funding mechanisms. Pledges totalling approximately $100 million had been received from a number of States at an extraordinary ministerial conference held in Rome on 15 March 2018. However, the 2018 programme budget was still facing a projected shortfall of $173 million, and the emergency humanitarian appeals were woefully underfunded. The current projected income would allow UNRWA to keep its schools open until the end of the current academic year and maintain its other operations until summer 2018. Unless there was a significant collective response, UNRWA would then be forced to scale back or cease its activities.

31. UNRWA provided essential services to a refugee population with significant and growing needs. It was educating half a million children, providing health care for 3 million people and supplying food or cash for food to 1.7 million. In doing so, it gave hope and dignity to Palestinian refugees, which was helping to promote stability and combat extremism in the Middle East. Furthermore, most UNRWA staff were refugees, and their income was vital to the economic well-being of Palestine refugee communities, in particular in Gaza, where employment opportunities were scarce. The situation in Gaza, which was home to 1.2 million Palestinian refugees suffering the effects of 10 years of blockade, conflict, unemployment and limited access to electricity and drinking water, was of particular concern. The number of refugees in Gaza receiving food assistance had now reached 1 million, and UNRWA had had to develop programmes to address a psychosocial epidemic of mental health problems among adults and children. The cessation of the Agency's services would thus have a devastating human impact, place a heavy burden on host countries and present a serious risk of unrest.

32. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that there had been a very strong expression of support for Palestinian refugees and UNRWA at the extraordinary ministerial conference held in Rome. His delegation welcomed the pledges that had been made and urged other Member States to make contributions as well. The Committee might wish to consider further ways to collaborate with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, as that partnership had been instrumental in the progress that had been made towards the establishment of a waqf for Palestine refugees administered by the Islamic Development Bank. It might also be useful to organize a conference, in collaboration with other organizations, to explore other ways to support UNRWA.

33. **The Chair** said that long-term solutions must be found, as it would be very difficult for UNRWA to operate on the basis of voluntary contributions indefinitely. Only a well-funded waqf would allow UNRWA to avoid endless financial stress. The Committee should also make the most of its visits to South America to raise awareness of the situation among the large, wealthy and generous Palestinian communities there and encourage them to contribute to the Agency.

34. **Mr. Mulrean** (Director, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

(UNRWA) Representative Office, New York) said that the new World Bank trust fund for UNRWA would be launched soon. Good progress was also being made towards the establishment of a waqf for UNRWA, which had the full support of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Islamic Development Bank.

Updates from Member States on their activities related to the question of Palestine

35. **Mr. Reyes Hernández** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that his delegation welcomed the Committee's planned activities. His Government continued to support the search for a just, lasting and peaceful solution to the Palestinian question on the basis of the two-State solution on the basis of the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as the capital of a Palestinian State living side by side in peace with Israel within secure and recognized borders.

36. Since the Committee's last meeting, his Government had signed a memorandum of understanding with the State of Palestine, which covered areas such as education, health care, agriculture, construction, investment in the real estate and hospitality sectors, aviation, engineering, the environment, water and energy. A number of government officials from his country and the State of Palestine had made public statements reaffirming their countries' unreserved support for one another. On 14 March 2018, the Autar Palestinian Cultural Centre in Nablus, State of Palestine, had held an event to honour the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for its support and solidarity. The President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela had publicly condemned the terrorist attack targeting the Prime Minister of the State of Palestine in the Gaza Strip in March 2018. A Venezuelan delegation had also expressed the country's firm support for the cause of the Palestinian people at the meeting of the Human Rights Council on the human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories, held in Geneva on 20 March 2018.

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.